

Muncie Civic Theatre: A Strategic Media Plan

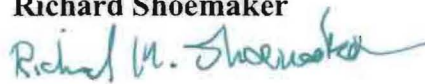
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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ABSTRACT

Muncie Civic Theatre is entering its 80th season in August, 2011. In the past year, not only has the theatre been making physical changes, but also have its operations. A major transition has been taking place, including changing in business practice, staff and management. However, with all of these great things happening, Civic isn't seeing a strong, consistent increase at the box office. Therefore, they need a way to reveal to the public the "new" Muncie Civic Theatre. This way they can reinvigorate passion in long-time patrons and attract new audiences alike, filling the seats once again. The following strategic marketing plan is to reintroduce the Muncie Civic Theatre to the community and create a renewed relationship with the citizens of Muncie.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Richard Shoemaker, my thesis advisor for being patient with me throughout the process.

A special thanks to Matt Wolfert for recognizing me as a person who could help Muncie Civic do great things. I am thankful to be a part of a new era at the theatre.

Thank you to Robby Tompkins for sharing the current Muncie Civic marketing materials with me and being accommodating my detailed requests for information.

A very special thank you to the Muncie Civic Board of Directors who gave me the green light on this project and offered their expertise on the theatre and its past.

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

When I first had lunch with Matt Wolfert, current MCT Board President, we met over circumstances not related to Muncie Civic in any way. However, from that lunch, I was offered a position as Administrative Assistant and Box Office Manager at the theatre. Once I became actively involved in the day-to-day running of the theatre and immersed in the unique culture of a community theatre I felt completely at home. I didn't understand how great work could be happening here and no one knew about it! I decided to dedicate my advertising and theatre background to creating a media plan that would reintroduce the theatre to the community and drive them to performances so they could see what I did.

Taking into account the limited finances available for marketing, I gave myself a \$5,000 media budget. Considering my other media plans for class projects have had budgets between 10 million and 100 million, this offered a welcome challenge. Especially since with local clients you usually work with limited cash.

I have really enjoyed working on this media plan and having the chance to give back to a theatre that allowed me to become a part of the wonderful changes happening at Muncie Civic Theatre



Media Plan

2011-2012 Season

Presented by Amanda Clark

May 2011

History

MCT History

The theatre is part of the historic Boyce Block, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. It was built in 1880. It is an excellent example of late 19th century commercial architecture. The theatre was constructed in 1904 as a vaudeville house and named the Star Theatre. The stage was dark from the late 1920s until 1936, when it opened as the Hoosier, offering live entertainment and motion pictures. The Hoosier's curtain came down for its final time in 1955 but was raised again in 1961 when Muncie Civic Theatre purchased the building.



MCT Mission

Muncie Civic Theatre Association (MCT) provides diverse theatrical opportunities for the artistic growth and enrichment of its audience, its volunteers, its performers, its directors, its designers, its technicians and its staff together produce meaningful live theatre for the personal enjoyment and cultural enhancement of all segments of Muncie and East Central Indiana. MCT is the owner-caretaker of a beautiful and historic theatre that houses a long-standing tradition that respects its ongoing commitment to excellence and its promise of future growth.



Political/Legal Factors

There are talks of merging the administrative and marketing for Muncie Symphony Orchestra, Muncie Civic Theatre and Cornerstone Center for the Arts. This merger would save the organizations money on administrative and marketing costs, centralize box office functions and make them eligible for new types of grants.

Muncie Civic Theatre is currently attempting to bring the building up to code in accordance with the Department of Homeland Security and the Fire Marshal. If these qualifications are not met by a certain deadline, the theatre will have to shut down. Currently, the theatre has been able to stay open due to showing progress at every visit.



Consumer Perceptions/Attitudes

Many members of the Muncie Community are unaware of the improvements being made at Civic. They still have an image of the theatre as mismanaged with mediocre to poor quality shows. The Ball State University Department of Theatre and Dance has had a rocky working relationship with Civic in the past. Involvement by Ball State professors, the addition of the BSU Theatre Department Chair to the MCT board and the recent hiring of Todd Sandman, Ball State theatre professor and former student, to the Artistic and Business Director position, are mending this relationship.

Target



BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY.



Students

These patrons are under the age of 25 and are drawn by big-name shows or knowing people in the performance. Price and travel time are significant factors when looking for entertainment.

Long-time Subscribers

Members of MCT for five or more years, they value the history and tradition of the theatre and will usually subscribe to the following season automatically. Using these patrons as brand ambassadors is important for word of mouth promotions.

Culture Seekers

These are members of the theatre or community members that seek out cultural content in Muncie and surrounding areas. They appreciate the arts and could someday be potential financial contributors. The Studio theatre productions will be a significant draw for these individuals.



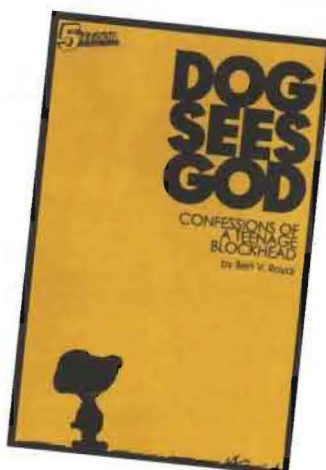
Patrons of the Arts

These patrons are frequent attendees at the various art performances around the area. They are more likely to donate to the theatre, but also donate to other organizations around town. These patrons are important to approach for special projects.

Untapped Potential

These are members of the Muncie community who have the leadership qualities, volunteer interest or talent to contribute to MCT. It is important to seek out and connect with these individuals, in addition to hosting a variety of events to bring them into the theatre.

2012

[illegible]

2012

Jan.					Feb.					Mar.					Apr.					May					June				July			
1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	30	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	1	8	15	22	29	
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Opportunity

Reintroduce the theatre to the community through promotional events that showcase the variety of the space.

Print

Newspaper	Ad Sizes	Cost/Ad	Circulation	Frequency	CPM	Total Cost
The Star Press--Daily + The Advertiser	5X5	\$135.35	114,400	7	138,350	\$968,45
The Star Press--Sunday	5X5	\$149.50	92,300	3	149,500	\$448,50
All Access	5X5	\$138.35	114,900	5	138,350	\$691.75

Total \$2,108.70

Local Newspaper

In the Muncie community, local newspaper is still a place where the population looks for what is going on that weekend. Appearing in "The Advertiser" guarantees exposure to non-Star Press subscribers, while "All Access" is the collection of local entertainment.

MCT Distribution Marketing Team

Use the database of marketing volunteers to create distribution teams. These teams of two or three will be assigned specific territories around the Muncie community and surrounding areas. These teams will pick up promotional materials and are responsible for posting it at specific businesses in those areas.

Flyers	# of Flyers	Est. Total Cost
Steel Magnolias	125	\$4.30
Rent	125	\$4.30
Scrooge	125	\$4.30
Last of the Red Hot Lovers	125	\$4.30
Chicago	125	\$4.30
It Happened on the Way to the Forum	125	\$4.30
In The Next Room	75	\$2.10
Marvin's Room	75	\$2.10
Dog Sees God	75	\$2.10
On Golden Pond	75	\$2.10
Cost of Ink	15 cartridges	\$375.00

Total \$409.20

Social Media & Email

Social Media Campaign Management

Muncie Civic Theatre has a good social media presence on Facebook, but it can expand and encourage more interaction with its fans, creating a stronger relationship.



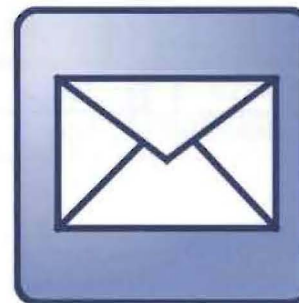
Use this platform to post updates about the rehearsal process for shows, links to “print your own” promotional material, promotional videos or “behind the scenes” looks at the cast or crew.



Post 30-second promotional videos, behind the scenes looks and updates from staff and board members.



Link to theatre articles of interest both locally and nationally as well as promotional material. Creating #trends during the week leading up to an opening night will encourage followers to pass on the news.



Biweekly emails will be generated and will include the following:

- o Upcoming Performances
- o Upcoming Auditions
- o Link to social media
- o Video promotion of upcoming show

Problem Live theatre is not a primary choice for entertainment among the community.

Opportunity Use social networking sites to showcase performances and utilize the theatre for other types of entertainment.

Season Kick-Off

Objective To introduce the new season and drive season subscriptions.

Strategy The new season will be announced at the annual Civies Awards Night on May 20th 2011.

Tactics The “Oscar-style” event will gather Muncie Civic patrons and volunteers to celebrate the past season. Teaser songs will be performed throughout the evening’s awards to generate excitement. Following the event, attendees will be able to commit to a season subscription in the lobby, securing their seats for the upcoming season.

Rationale The atmosphere of the theatre will create a large event instigating buzz and word-of-mouth potential. Giving attendees a first pick at season tickets creates a sense of exclusivity, making the seats something of psychological value.



New Year's Eve Gala

Objective Increase the social value of Muncie Civic Theatre in the community and promote theatre rental.

Strategy Host a New Year's Eve Gala for attendees on the stage and in the lobby to create a "high class" experience.

Tactics Patrons and community members can buy tickets to attend the Gala. Local artists will perform live entertainment and a silent auction will take place to benefit Civic children's programs. The event will include with hors d'oeuvres and the night will be capped off with a champagne toast at midnight. Partners will include The Silo for the champagne toast and cash bar and Superent for the place-settings, tables and chairs.

Rationale Community members will view Civic as a great place to hold their next event and gain a perception of the theatre as a place that provides quality entertainment and experiences.

Cost \$500 for local entertainment and decoration

Problem MCT's competitors offer similar performances on a grander scale for less money.

Opportunity Position MCT's community theatre atmosphere as a unique experience for less than a movie ticket.



Recommendations

Problem MCT does not have a large marketing budget to spread awareness of performances.

Opportunity Maximize social media and the Internet to spread awareness with key spending in other media around performance dates.



Continue to look for free promotional outlets.

Expand marketing to surrounding areas such as Fort Wayne and Indianapolis as the marketing budget grows

Seek sponsors to cover the \$265 extra in the budget and to offset the cost of any other aspects of marketing and promotional events

Continue The Civies as an annual event.

Add other comedy and musical performance acts as they become available and fit into the season. Use free vehicles to promote these events and leftover flyer budget.

***Muncie Civic Theatre belongs to the people.
The people are Muncie Civic Theatre.***